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ABSTRACT

Teachers have the paradoxical dual responsibility of fostering children's personal autonomy while ensuring that the children follow necessary rules affecting their health, safety, and educational development. Unfortunately, it is not always easy to determine when children should be allowed freedom and when they need regulation, and on occasion teachers may overstep reasonable bounds in either direction. The teachers' behaviors in these cases may be seen as the results of interpreting the situations in question using patterns of response developed earlier in life. To understand why these situations are inappropriately interpreted, teachers must review their own pasts and identify the incidents that gave rise to those patterns of response, then analyze the reasons behind the relationships between the incidents and the response patterns. A promising tool for this self-study is the autobiography. Ideally the autobiographical text will consist of responses made during an interview, since the respondent is less likely under interview conditions to find ways to present the past in a self-serving light. The autobiographical material can then be analyzed by the teacher for clues to his or her present behavior. (PGD)

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PATTERNS OF INTERPRETATION AND THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL METHOD

- SOME REMARKS FOR EDUCATORS -

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If we concede as one of the fundamental attributes of an educator or of his pedagogical actions respectively to give children at one side the greatest possibility of autonomy and at the other side to take care of them in the sense of being responsible in such situations which they can not cope with, there we are faced with a paradoxon. This 'How can we help the children to be self-determinated under the conditions of a powerful or coersive relation was once characterized by the great German philosopher Immanuel KANT in his lectures "On Pedagogy" (1961); he told us:" The question is how is it possible to reconcile the submission to the legal obligation with the ability to make use of our own freedom."

Even if this looks at a first glance as an impossible task for the educator we can still suppose that more or less all grown-ups reach that aim of self-determination and self-reliance. But is it not true,too, that we just as an educator can not find the necessary balance between the two constitutive elements of education as described before: between giving autonomy and being responsible? That are the two requisites for a fully developed personality. So often we tend in one moment more to one side and in the next moment more to the other side. This means for example that in some moments in which it would be better to give autonomy to the child we do in fact emphasize too much the role of the care taker. Or the other way around, we presuppose autonomy and are being careless but the cared-for is not able to assess the situation in the right way.

Often we as an educator detect this insufficiencies by ourselves and we are unsatisfied about it. But there are also different methods in the educational practice which enable us to control our behavior, f.e. supervision, observational methods, videofeedback and so on. But in doing this we can not find the antecedents of our pedgogical behavior. The next step should be to bring to the light the so far unsettled aspects of the very own biography which might have led to the attitudes criticized. This I like to call the process of self-enlightenment or self education. Often this way is only available by the therapeutic process of psychoanalysis.

In the following I would like to outline in the sequel a method that is to understand as a socio-analytic method. In this we could find an approach to those in our biography embodied patterns of reactions on problems of action that determine our recent educational behavior. I would like to call this deeply rooted patterns as patterns of interpretation that are everyday life theories which we use to interpret our reality. Those theories are patterns of bunchs of interpretations that are necessary for a meaningful structuring the everyday life of the actors. Patterns of interpretation gurantee the ability to act because they belong to the knowledge at hand which has its rationality by that what HABERMAS called 'Geltungsansprüche'(validiation of communication). He or she is relieved and needs in cases of conflict not again and again think about new alternatives to act; he or she needs not decide again and again , not to legitimate and then to act. If we have to look always for ra-

tional criterions of our acting we never would be able to act.

But it is typically for the profession of education to act spontaneously without a rational legitimation in the same moment. If we teach children it is not possible to legitimate all reactions to the the problems we have with them.. In this sense the patterns of interpretation are available for the actor.

But it is also true that due to certain conditions of socialization in the biography of the educator there might be a reason for an inappropriate use of these patterns of interpretation. And the socio-analytic method is to cover up those patterns of interpretation and their genesis. The implicationson of some biographical conditions could influence our current patterns of interpretation. So it happens very often that we do not allow independent actions to the child although he or she would be able to act so according to his or her level of development. The ecucators behavior could be determinated by the patterns of interpretation that is rigid and unflexible. But so we prevent the childs autonomic efforts.

Patterns of interpretation are not to be confounded with some psychological constructs as defense mechanisms or attitudes. They are social facts (fait sociaux) in a Durkheimian sense which clame validity i a certain historical and societel context. The genesis of patterns of interpretation is

rooted in the praxis of socializing interactions. By the participation in the interactions with adults - especially his or her parents - the child reads off such rules as patterns of interpretation to problematic actions that are embedded in these very structures of interactions. But this happens not as a mere coping-model. Instead it is to unterstand as a way of interpretive reconstruction by the child in a Piagetian sense. Now we are also able to indentify the method which we have to use in revealing patterns of interpretation: it is the reconstructive method.

I coin the term reconstructive method for such procedures which in contrast to a methodology that deals with given categories, describes and emphasizes the given text-structure in an interpretive manner. It is a way of sociological hermeneutics. The method uses the interpretative procedures which are necessary in everyday life to give sense to an action. Those procedures could be described as meaning attributing and meaning decoding relating to the analysis of the text. This text is not a literaric one but protocols of interactions or as Paul RICOEUR (1972), a French philosopher, has called it "the text is a fixed action". The interpretation of such a text differs from interpretative routines of everyday life only in that it is action relieved. What does it mean? The scientific interpreter or the hermeneut is not forced to decode the meaning of the interaction of a subject without a time-lag in order to continue the interaction by the way of his or her reaction. Quite on the contrary he or she on principle is given infinite time to reconstruct the

whole content of meaning. From an epistemological point of view there is no difference between scientific and everyday life interpretations because they want to reach the same aim. In the analysis of patterns of interpretation we are using exactly this procedure of a sociological hermeneutics. It is a way to find out figures of interactions or argumentations which are available as responses to problematic actions. In order to make use of these procedures for the formentioned task of self-analysis we have to look for qualified material. I think it is quite obvious that autobiographical texts are very well for this task.

If we pursue the concept of autobiography in former times so it appears at the first time in the middle of the 18th century in the european literature. It is connected with the category of identity as a form of a description of the subject. In the autobiography there are typical structural elements, which demarcate this form of literature from other forms as essays and so on: there is an identity between the author as a narrative I and the I about whom is spoken. Or as HOWARTH(1980) has discribed the author as two persons in one, "telling the story as a narrator, enacting it as a protagonist."(87)

First we have to distinguish between the written form of an autobiography and the verbal form as a narrative told in an interview. The main difference is that the author of the written form can think about his or her life before he or she is editing the text. He or she can interpret life events

for the importance of his or her own biography. In this sense autobiographies are mainly a search for one's own identity. So this form as KOHLI (1981) mentioned, "presupposes a developed individuality, a self-conscious 'I' being able to grasp itself as the organizer of its own life history and as distinct from its social world"(64). The author of the written form can think about what he is going to say to an idealized reader without the pressure to act. So it is possible that he palliate his life story. In contrast to the written form the narrator in an interview must react to the question asked by an interviewer who can and will inquire directly. This is the normal situation of a face-to-face-interaction where is a pressure to act and to react. It is almost impossible for the interviewee to answer "Just wait a moment, I have to think about your question."

But still we are facing the same problem as with the written form of autobiographies namely that the texts author could forget or repress certain important life events because of his or her defense mechanisms or the gaps in his or her memories. But again this text is in principle open to interpretation.

To fulfill the task which I descriped by way of introduction as the self-enlightenment or self-education by an autobiographical analysis we have to look for the best form of the autobiographical material. I would nominate the verbal form because it is more open to the interesting aspects. Practically this means that someone has to interview ourselves. After

the transciptions we have the text as a basis for interpretation.

In order to analyse autobiographies we have to look for certain elements in the text: objectives and facts ; subjective experiences and their organizations; reminiscences; representations of life events; reflections and interpretations. An analysis of patterns of interpretation has to take into account all these facts because we can at the one hand read off the typical life situations of the subject and because at the other hand we are also able to find specific patterns of reactions to action problems. The interpretation will have to proceed that in the process of hermeneutic reconstruction we have to take the speaker at his or her words. It is to disclose the structure of meaning which will be expressed in the text. The hermeneut has to ask for the meaning of the utterances. The questionses for reasons follows the questionses for meanings which might have led the text's author to his or her utterances. Jürgen HABERMAS has emphasized the aspect of reasons as the important one for an interpretation of a text. He says: "Only to the extent that the interpreters grasp the reasons that allow the author's utterance to appear rational do they understand what the author could have meant. Thus, the interpreters understand the meaning of the text only to the extent that they see why the author felt himself/herself entitled to put forward (as true) certain assertions, to recognize (as right) certain values and norms, and to express (as sincere) certain experiences." And he continoues: "The interpreters cannot under-

stand the semantic content of a text if they are not in a position to present the reasons to themselves that the author might have adduced in the initial conditions."

In the reconstruction of the structures of meaning of the utterances and of their reasons we find the main aspects that I have termed as patterns of interpretation . From a point of view as an observer's or a third-person position the interpreter has to elaborate those patterns of argumentation which emerge as responses to problematic actions. If we can find these patterns in different passages of the text again and again than we can describe them as patterns of interpretation in a typical sense.

I would like to go back to the task which I mentioned at the beginning. I would like to try to underline the contribution of an analysis of patterns of interpretation which is oriented at autobiographical material. In making us to the interpreter of our own biography - and don't forget we are the author and the protagonist as well - we are moving through various steps of reflections. This means a step foreward to enlightenment about the conditions of our own socialization and of those conditions which determinate our current pedagogical actions. Patterns of interpretation which are decoded in such an interpretation of a text can show us likely the weakness which has led to the imbalance between autonomy and responsibility. By the way of reconstruction of patterns of interpretation in our own life story we do also learn something about our current used patterns of interpretation.

Hence we have established the basis for the process which I have called self-enlightenment and self-education. By understanding ourselves in a better way we are able to change our behaviour in the first place. And who would not agree that self-reliance and reflections about ourselves are one of the most important features of a good educator!

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